

COMMENTARY

WHY WE MUST DEFEND FORMOSA

An Alternative China to Mao's Terror State

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THE treaty of defensive alliance which the United States has concluded with the government of the Republic of China in Taipeh means that for an indefinite time to come—except in the event of a Chinese Communist victory in war against America—what is called Nationalist China will be enabled to survive with American support in the island of Formosa.

The policy to which the United States is now formally committed has both strategic and political implications: inevitably it has

been the former on which public attention in the West has been focused, and there has been relatively little speculation on the future of the Chinese Nationalist regime under the conditions which have been laid down by the treaty. But complex and difficult political problems are involved, particularly because the clarification of American policy, while providing a more definite assurance of security than Formosa has hitherto received, has at the same time gone far to discourage the hopes of early return to the mainland, on which Chinese Nationalist morale has up to now been nourished.

The assignment of Formosa to the United States, or even to the free world as a whole, tends to assist the Chinese Communist propaganda line that Formosa has been seized by American imperialism for the sake of purely American interests. This propaganda spoke of Formosa being "occupied" by Americans even before American Air Force units moved in there under the recent agreement: the line is to make the most of the American presence on a piece of Chinese territory and to represent the "traitorous Chiang Kai-shek clique" as mere puppets of foreign invaders. The real American purpose is, on the other hand, to support a sovereign Chinese administration in a detached Chinese province and preserve it against a revolutionary Communist regime which has made war on the United States

PLAIN sense (not to speak of elementary conscience) on the Formosa situation is surprisingly hard to come by at a time when confusion, illusion, and sheer panic seem to possess so many, particularly among our "leading opinion-molders." It is plain sense, and a recognition of the hard and simple realities of fact (and commitment) that G. F. HUDSON endeavors to give us in this, his second article, on the defense of Formosa. The first, entitled "The Basis for Our Defense of Formosa," appeared in our March number. Mr. Hudson, a steady contributor to COMMENTARY (this is the third successive month in which he appears in its pages), is an eminent specialist in Far Eastern affairs, and is well on the way to becoming an equally eminent one on the East-West conflict in general. Born in England in 1903, he studied in Japan and has written several books on the Far East. Today he is director of the newly founded center for Far Eastern Studies of St. Anthony's College in Oxford.

(and other members of the United Nations) and is supplied and protected by the Soviet Union. President Eisenhower, in his message to Congress on the defense of Formosa, clearly stated this aim by putting succor to a "brave ally" in the forefront of his appeal.

It is not simply a question of American forces defending a piece of American territory, or an area under American jurisdiction, as if it were Hawaii or Okinawa. Formosa cannot hope to resist the power of the Communist bloc without American support, but neither can America expect to keep it out of Communist hands without the positive cooperation of the Chinese armed forces and people in the island: if these were for any reason to pass over to the other side, an entirely new situation would arise which has not so far been envisaged in the making of policy. What exists at present is an alliance, and as in all alliances, the political foundation must be maintained intact or the superstructure of defense arrangements built on it will fall to the ground.

THAT something has been saved from the shipwreck of China should be a matter for congratulation to all who recognize the danger of totalitarian Communism in Asia, no matter how low a view is taken of the past record of the Kuomintang. As the most numerous nation in the world, with the natural resources and human potential to become within a short time an industrial and military power of a rank appropriate to their population, the Chinese present the most significant question mark of our age. What kind of power are they to be in the world of the future? After a long period of confusion, backwardness, and adversity in which their traditional pride was humbled in the dust, it was to be anticipated in any case that their late arrival among the great powers would be marked by excesses of self-assertion and resentment over real or fancied grievances. But up to 1949 it could still be hoped that their international development would be in friendly relations with the West, and their internal political evolution in the direction of liberal and humane ideals, even

if it were not immediately a wholly democratic one.

The subjection of China to a Communist regime, signifying the conversion of a fifth of the world's population to a creed of intolerance and violence, was therefore a catastrophe of the first magnitude. There are many in the West, particularly in Europe, who still try to minimize the disaster that has occurred and set their hopes on some kind of magical softening influence which Western diplomats and businessmen could exert on the Marxist-Leninist heart if only all Western governments would renounce all remaining ties with Chinese anti-Communists and enter into unreservedly "friendly" relations with the new regime. For those, on the other hand, who do not expect to gather figs from thistles, the best that can be done in a very grim situation is to keep alive on a fragment of Chinese territory some un-brainwashed residue of that China which was the ally of the Western democracies in the war against Japan only a decade ago.

For the whole point of a totalitarian conquest, which distinguishes it from a mere ordinary change of government or shift of policy, is its all-engulfing character: a nation, once captured, is subjected—and particularly the young—to a comprehensive indoctrination and conditioning which leaves no opposition except a voiceless and unorganized quantity of dissent within the national frontiers, and a number of scattered refugees and exiles in the territories of other states. When this situation has been brought about, the totalitarian government can claim that its regime is identical with the nation and that any emigrés who try to speak to the people from abroad are mere agents of foreign powers, uprooted and isolated from their own country. It is different, however, if an opposition can hold out in some part of the national territory where it can maintain an independent organized administration and a genuinely national political and cultural life. Such a regime, even if it has no immediate prospect of overthrowing its totalitarian rival, is a permanent challenge to

the latter, depriving it of that completeness of domination at which it aims and providing always an alternative center of political power and attraction.

THE value of such a center of opposition from the point of view of those who feel threatened by a totalitarian power does not depend on the opposition leadership being an embodiment of all human virtues. In a situation of totalitarian aggressiveness any opposition is of value, provided it has a substantial following and a real will to resist. But naturally, the better the political quality of the opposition, the more likely it will be to make an effective appeal to the subjects of the rival regime, and the fewer doubts foreign governments need feel in giving it support.

With regard to the authority now ruling Formosa, it cannot be denied that it suffers from much that is disreputable in its past record, and that the defeats which drove it from the mainland were in large measure due to its failure to retain the confidence of wide sections of the Chinese people in the period following the end of the Pacific war. Yet, even on the past record, it must be pointed out that the defects of the Kuomintang regime have been systematically magnified for political reasons by Western governments which needed either a scapegoat for their own muddles of postwar policy or an excuse for hasty recognition of the People's Republic.

The American *White Paper* of 1949 was concerned to demonstrate that the American government from 1944 onwards had done everything possible, short of actual military intervention, to uphold the Chinese National government against the Communists, but was frustrated by the unreasonableness and incompetence of those whom it was trying to help—a contention which does not account for the effects of the Marshall mission or the delays and deficiencies of American military aid to the National government. Similarly, British officialdom, having rushed into recognition of Communist China without America and having achieved nothing thereby but

complications and embarrassment, has been anxious to convince everybody that at any rate it had been quite right to have nothing more to do with the "busted war lord" on Formosa.

BUT if allowance is made for the motives of all this official denigration, and the facts of the record are fairly considered in relation to the Chinese historical background, the story of the Kuomintang is by no means the disgraceful one that it is commonly thought to be, even by many of those who believe that Formosa must somehow be kept from falling into Communist hands. In the decade 1927-37, before the Japanese invasion interrupted their attempt to unify and modernize China, the Kuomintang leaders, including several who are now in Formosa, won the esteem of a number of responsible foreign observers who had close contact with them and understood their difficulties. Inheriting a country with virtually no modern industry not owned by foreigners, with an anarchic military system, and no regular professional civil service on which to build a modern state, they had a task which even with twenty years of external peace would have taxed their abilities to the utmost.

The Japanese invasion and eight years of devastating war destroyed the beginnings of new growth and, by isolating the government in the still "feudal" interior of the country, eliminated the more liberal and progressive elements in its composition, while the currency inflation, which was an almost inevitable concomitant of China's struggle, revived and intensified the old habits of official corruption. Even so, and with all the apathy and war-weariness Americans found in China by 1944, the story of China's eight-year resistance to Japan is a glorious one, and it is not one that the Communists can claim as their own, for the leadership remained throughout with the National government, and the main brunt of military operations was always borne by the nationalist forces.

If Chiang Kai-shek and his colleagues had been nothing but the selfish reactionaries

that they are now so often represented as having been, it would have been easy enough for them to have accepted one of the attractive peace offers the Japanese kept on dangling in front of them. It was because they would accept nothing short of complete sovereign independence for China that they continued a struggle which often seemed a lost cause. After the war, when the Communists were still poorly equipped, the National government could probably have regained control of all China that mattered if the Soviet Union had carried out the terms of the Sino-Soviet treaty of August 1945 (which would have put the Nationalists in effective control of Manchuria and prevented the Japanese arms dumps there from falling into Communist hands), and if the American government had afforded moral and material support instead of the fatuous Marshall mediation.

All that, however, belongs to the past and cannot now be altered: it is necessary to refer to it only because it is still widely assumed that there is nothing in the Kuomintang political tradition that can ever again appeal to the people of China or that is capable of inspiring a new generation of political leaders. In fact, the defeat of the Nationalists in the civil war after the shattering of the Chinese state and society by the Japanese invasion no more proves the worthlessness of the former regime than Hitler's achievement of power in Germany proved that there was never anything good or decent in the Weimar Republic.

ON THE other hand, it is important not to fall into the opposite excess of believing that the bulk of the people of China are longing for the return of their old rulers. However deep may be the disillusionment of the Chinese peasants and middle classes who were formerly attracted by the tactical promises of the Communists, the new regime has established a firm central control and orderly administration throughout China, which, after the long years of foreign invasion and civil war, is something that gives the present rulers an immense advantage

over any agitation that can only lead to a new civil war. As also in Spain, there is a feeling that anything is better than another round of domestic fighting, that the issue has been decided, and one must put up with the consequences.

This attitude of acceptance of an accomplished fact may change in time, particularly if one of Communist China's external adventures goes wrong or if serious dissensions develop within the ruling group. But at present there is no evidence of a degree of unrest or disruption in Communist China which would justify any hope of a return of the Nationalists to the mainland in the near future. The only reasonable hope for the Nationalists must lie in a long-term policy of building in Formosa a political and social order which will continually present the example of a Chinese alternative to the system established on the mainland.

It is impossible to foresee the circumstances in which the Communist dictatorship might break up or be weakened, but if that time should come—and the experience of history indicates that it will come sooner or later to such a regime, whether in Russia or in China—it will make all the difference whether or not an organized alternative order exists in one province of China. On the other hand, there cannot be any question in the future of a simple Kuomintang reconquest of the mainland or of a restoration of the party's former "tutelage." China has at least been administratively unified by Communism, and the struggle against Communist tyranny can only be based on a principle of democratic freedom with a plurality of political parties.

THERE is, however, a great psychological difficulty to be overcome if the Nationalists are to pursue a long-term policy of fighting Communism by political rather than military means. The Kuomintang leaders and the troops who followed them to Formosa are exiles from their homes, even if they are still on what they regard as Chinese soil, and their morale has hitherto been sustained by the hope of an early victorious re-

turn to the mainland; though constantly postponed, the glorious day has always been just around the corner. Formosa has been regarded as a mere temporary base, not as a country to be governed and defended as an end in itself. What will be the effect on the Nationalists from the mainland when it finally becomes clear to them that—barring some unforeseeable contingency—they are destined to stay in Formosa for an indefinite period and must make of it, not only their home, but a separate state?

THAT they will soon be compelled to renounce the myth of immediate return is implied in the very terms of the treaty by which the United States has undertaken to protect Formosa. The American commitment is confined to Formosa, the Pescadores, and any positions regarded as essential for their defense, and the Nationalists are bound not to embark on any military operations without consulting their ally. This means that they cannot just make a landing on the mainland coast, hoping to pull in the Americans as soon as they get into trouble. The pact itself and what is known of American policy preclude any idea of American support for a Nationalist offensive. If there is war on the China coast, it can only be by the act of the Communists; that indeed might open up possibilities of a major upheaval in China, but it is not an outcome that the Nationalists themselves can bring about.

If there is only a war of nerves, with desultory local fighting, during the next few months, American policy may be expected to move in the direction of the "Two Chinas" solution—a *modus vivendi* based on recognition of Communist China and Nationalist China as two separate states and leading eventually to the seating of both Peking and Taipeh government delegates in the United Nations. Such a development, even though it left the Nationalist government in Taipeh secure and independent, would be a very severe blow to its prestige and self-esteem as an authority claiming to be the sole legal government of China, located in Formosa

only as a temporary retreat in a continuing struggle.

It would be extremely difficult for the Nationalists to adjust themselves to the idea of terminating the Chinese civil war—even though there has been hardly any real fighting in it since 1949—and devoting themselves to building a new miniature China in Formosa. It may be that the disappointment and sense of frustration will be too great for some of them to bear, and that there will be further internal discords and defection. Some of the malcontents may try to make their peace with the Communists, others may leave Formosa and go abroad, as Li Tsung-jen and K. C. Wu have already done. It would probably be wise to allow any soldiers who wish to go back to Communist territory to do so rather than try and hold them by force in Formosa. But there will probably be enough reliable personnel, both civil and military, to operate an independent state in Formosa, and make it work.

Much would depend on the political handling, including the forms of words used in American official statements. It must always be clearly recognized that the separation of Formosa is not a matter of nationality, that both Communist China and Nationalist are Chinese states, that the separation is due solely to the fact that all political and cultural freedom has been destroyed on the mainland by the Communist dictatorship, and that Formosa is ready to reunite with the rest of China whenever conditions of liberty are established there. Formosa will be a state in which Chinese national feeling and patriotism are cultivated, even though in practical politics a provincial Formosan outlook may become stronger as time goes on.

THE great difficulty in organizing a viable state in Formosa lies in the fact that its population now consists of two far from harmonious ingredients—the native Formosan Chinese, among whom the older generation, having grown up under Japanese rule, generally speak Japanese and one of the Fukien dialects, but do not understand standard Chinese, and the refugees from the

mainland, including the bulk of the army, who do not have any roots in the island and have overloaded its economic capacity.

The administration of Formosa reflects this dual composition of the people, for there are two distinct authorities—the national government itself with its ministries, and the provincial government of Formosa, the territory of the province being identical with that controlled by the national government, except for Matsu and Quemoy, which theoretically belong to the province of Fukien. If the national government were to be reduced in form as well as in fact to being the administration of Formosa alone, the native Formosans would probably press for a much larger share in the governing of the island than they now have, and the existence of a large distinct “central” government apparatus run by mainlanders and only distantly concerned with the affairs of Formosa itself would become increasingly difficult to justify.

On the other hand, there is no good reason to suppose that the Formosans, if they get more political power, will wish either to secede permanently from China or rush into the arms of the People's Republic. With already a decade of Chinese school education since the end of Japanese rule, their younger generation already have much more Chinese National consciousness than the older. There is still a strong local particularism which clashes with the outlook of the refugees from the mainland, but it does not help the Communists who rule China from Peking, and the more responsive the government in Taipei becomes to the local interests and needs of the Formosans, the more they will regard it as their own.

THE question of the relations between the refugee Nationalists and the native Formosans is linked with that of political democracy in Nationalist China. If the Nationalists are to make a democratic political appeal against Communism, they must practice what they preach. On the other hand, in a country which has up to now had no tradition or experience of democracy, a government engaged in civil war against a totali-

tarian enemy and menaced with every kind of fifth-column subversion has to go slowly in introducing freedom of opposition.

Formosa is still in a state of siege and Communist agents are continually entering it either as spies or to foment disorder. A strong counter-espionage organization is a necessity for the survival of the regime. There are undoubtedly, however, too many features of the “police state” in Formosa today, and one of the greatest advantages of a cease-fire agreement, if it could be brought about, would be that the ensuing relaxation of tension, together with the sense of external security provided by the defense treaty with America, would permit the beginnings of a democratic political development free from the immediate stresses inherent in a war situation.

To say that it would permit such beginnings is not, of course, to say that they will in fact be initiated. That will depend on the Nationalist leadership, and if the latter entirely fails to rise to its political opportunities, nobody in the long run will be able to save it from itself. It must always be borne in mind, however, in answer to the gibe that the quarrel in China is between two parties equally authoritarian, that their principles drive them in diametrically opposite directions; the Kuomintang, although holding that a period of “tutelage” or single-party rule was necessary to unify China after the anarchy of the war-lord period, has as its proclaimed objective a system of multi-party democracy, whereas Communism, although allowing for the subordinate existence of other parties in the initial phase of its revolution, aims at absolute single-party rule as the ideal form of government.

In political theory, therefore, the Kuomintang can certainly claim to stand for democracy in the Western sense as against the Communists, but the sooner it gives a convincing demonstration of its purpose, the better it will be able to make an appeal to those numerous Chinese who once foolishly favored the Communists as the party of liberty and have now learnt what Communist promises really mean.

IMPORTANT as it is that Formosa should be as democratic as possible, it is even more important that it should enjoy full independence as a sovereign state. Chinese national pride will be rendered more sensitive by the small compass of Formosan territory and the dependence on America for supplies and defensive aid, and the surest way to bring about a disintegration of the Nationalist regime will be for the United States to intervene actively in its affairs. That will also give ground for Communist propaganda to label it scornfully a mere stooge apparatus—or, as a British Labor member of Parliament expressed it, “a government whose only function is to administer an American base.”

It lies with Washington to decide by the conduct of its policy whether the Chinese Nationalists are to appear in the eyes of China and of Asia as a bunch of small boys ordered about by an American schoolmaster, or whether they can hold up their heads as a genuinely independent and respected ally of the United States. The American ambassador in Taipeh will have plenty of opportunities for discreet influence and advice, but the temptation to use the American position to impose something like a protectorate in the old colonial sense must be resisted if the Nationalist government is to retain its own self-respect and its prestige among a proud and sensitive people.

It is, nevertheless, essential that the United States should retain unimpaired the special responsibility for Formosa which it has undertaken by the treaty of alliance, and not try to internationalize it by handing it over to the United Nations. Formosa must be either a fully independent state or nothing.

It is not a backward or primitive territory which requires special international supervision, and any form of United Nations trusteeship would be entirely inappropriate to it.

Efforts will probably be made in the coming months to get Formosa treated as a “ward” of the United Nations on the ground that it has no clearly defined judicial status and has become an international problem. But if the government of Formosa is not the residue of the former Republic of China preserved from Communist conquest by alliance with the United States, then it is nothing at all, and the island might as well be handed over to the Communists without more ado.

The only justifiable aim for Western policy with regard to Formosa is to maintain the existence of an alternative China, a Chinese state which, however small, is not drenched with hatred of the West, is not brainwashed into a cruel ideological fanaticism, and is not linked with the Soviet Union as a promoter of world revolution. In the island of Formosa, given a period of peace and security—and the hypothesis of a major war in the Far East in the immediate future is not here considered—the Chinese can renew and continue that promising development of a new way of life, modern and yet continuous with the traditions of the past, which had begun before the immense successive disasters of Japanese invasion and Communist domination fell upon China. To render this possible is at present all that the West can do for China, but if it is done with sincerity and resolution, we can be confident that something of enduring value will have been salvaged from the worst of shipwrecks.